

Controlling Costs and Quality

in the Early Phases of the Accommodation Process

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The writing of this book was commissioned by Delft University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Real Estate & Housing Department
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Design
C. Gerritse / J. Schievink (cover), C. Gerritse (inside pages)

Photography
Section 2.2, Page 13 and Section 8.3, page 83 (VROM Building):
Faculty of Architecture Photographic Service, Delft University of Technology
Section 8.3, page 83 (The Hague City Hall):
Municipality of The Hague

English translation:
V.J. Joseph English Language Services, S.W. Bijleveld

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First edition 2008

Published by
VSSD

Leeghwaterstraat 42, 2628 CA Delft, The Netherlands
tel. +31 15 27 82124, telefax +31 15 27 87585, e-mail: hlf@vssd.nl
internet: <http://www.vssd.nl/hlf>

URL about this book: **<http://www.vssd.nl/hlf/b013.htm>**

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First printed edition: ISBN 978-90-6562-159-7

Electronic version: ISBN 978-90-6562-171-9

NUR 955

Keywords: costs and quality control

Preface

'Precious' can have two meanings: expensive and valuable. This is a good illustration of how inseparable the concepts of cost and quality are. During the design process, designers make thousands of decisions which interact with one another and which have major consequences for both quality and costs. So designing is an iterative process, an ongoing effort to make the best decisions within the given conditions. Designers are also in the habit of seeking new possibilities by challenging the limiting conditions. The increasing complexity of building projects has meant that various designers and consultants have to work on solutions in parallel, as a team. It is a situation in which cost control in the traditional sense (of budget monitoring) is likely to have an inhibiting effect on any readiness to try new possibilities. The involvement of costing experts in the planning and design decisions is intended, rather, to promote unexpected solutions. Such specialists are required to consider costs from the viewpoint of a designer rather than that of an accountant. Unfortunately, knowledge about the relation between quality and costs is not widely spread, so that this subject is poorly represented in the training of designers. This results in missed opportunities.

In the Netherlands, extra research efforts have been made in this field since the early 1980s on the initiative of the Government Architect of that period, Tjeerd Dijkstra. A body of knowledge has been acquired that has made the relation between costs and quality transparent and open to discussion. Extensive use of this knowledge has been made in recent decades for the development of new building types, which have been built and evaluated in practice. The Netherlands has consequently built up a lead in the area, so stimulating international efforts to explore the subject farther. It is surprising that this knowledge continues to play so little part in the training of designers; they are after all the ones who can take advantage of the knowledge to explore new possibilities. Kees Gerritse was one of the researchers who played a key role in this field in recent decades, contributing his background as an architect. In this book he introduces us to the world of cost/quality control in the early phases of the accommodation process, the phases where the most important decisions affecting cost and quality are made. It is a clear, accessible text that gives the reader insight into the possibilities and limitations of design decisions. I warmly recommend this book for use in training, practice and research.

Prof. Ir. Hans de Jonge

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Contents

Preface	v
Contents	vi
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to this book	1
1.2 This book	2
2 Costs and quality	5
2.1 Terms and definitions	6
2.2 Characteristics and how to measure them	8
2.3 Hard and soft qualities	10
2.4 Cost definitions	12
3 The accommodation cycle	15
3.1 The process	16
3.2 Decision-making and information	18
4 Cost and quality control	21
4.1 The character of a cost estimate	22
4.2 Cost units and unit rates	24
4.3 Knowledge based on project analysis	26
4.4 Quantity analysis	28
4.5 Cost analysis	30
4.6 Indices	32
4.7 Control using indices	34
4.8 Model studies	36
4.9 Cost generators	38
5 Required space	41
5.1 Terms and definitions	42
5.2 Functional useful floor area	44
5.3 Furnishing systems and workplace innovation	46
5.4 From functional to gross floor area	48
5.5 Choice of grid	50
5.6 Access system and building form	52
6 Stacking	55
6.1 Quantities and costs	56
6.2 Floor area utilization	58
6.3 Element quantities	60
6.4 Building costs and operating costs	62
7 Grain size	65
7.1 Average room size	66
7.2 Model study	68
7.3 Affect on building costs	70

8	Internal space	73
8.1	Quantities	74
8.2	Building costs	76
8.3	Atriums and conservatories	78
8.4	High rise	80
9	Cost/quality modelling	83
9.1	Relations	84
9.2	Model definition: the organization model	86
9.3	Model definition: the building model	88
9.4	Building model on a geometrical basis	90
9.5	Building model on a statistical basis	92
9.6	Loadbearing structure and unit rates	94
9.7	Interior climate, comfort and flexibility	96
9.8	Modelling HVAC systems	98
9.9	Energy consumption	100
9.10	Environmental effects	102
9.11	Assigning costs to designated functions	104
9.12	Apportioning costs over support and infill	106
9.13	Calculation for a building stock	108
10	Epilogue	110
	Literature and other sources	113
	Index	119

